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MAKING A MINISTRY

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There are many fine things doing in our theological seminaries of the better class. Theological faculties are loyal to scholarship but they are coming to see that the world of our children is much more important for preachers than the world of our grandfathers—saints though they may have been. Mr. Cuninggim's paper tells how the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is facing its problem. We think the record of its achievements inspiring.

Leadership is a great word today. It is being discussed on every platform. From many departments of life and service is being sounded the call for capable leaders. The church is not an exception. No task confronting organized Christianity is more urgent than the development of an efficient ministry. All denominations are more or less impressed with the need, and are endeavoring as best they can to meet it.

Among those that are devoting large attention to the making of a ministry is the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. During the last decade it has made great progress in working out plans to this end. Prior to that time the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University was doing a splendid work in training the ministry, but only a small number were receiving its advantages. The only theological training required of all the men entering the itinerancy consisted of the Conference Course of Study, selected by the bishops of the church, upon which they were required annually for four years, to pass an examination before Annual Conference committees. In 1902, however, an advance step was taken by the General Conference in establishing a

Correspondence School, for the purpose, chiefly, of giving instruction to those pursuing the Conference Course of Study. This school, under the direction of the Board of Education and the biblical faculty of Vanderbilt University, proved a great success. Since its advantages, however, were confined largely to those who were already in the pastorate, it was necessary to devise other means by which to reach and assist ministerial candidates at an earlier period of their development. With this in mind the General Conference of 1910 inaugurated, in connection with the Board of Education, the Department of Ministerial Supply and Training, and committed to it the task of developing an efficient ministry for the church. The department thus has a large and varied work.

First of all, attention is being given to increasing the supply of candidates for the ministry. Statistics have been carefully gathered as to the need for men, the educational qualifications of those offering themselves, the conditions under which they are being called, the agencies that are most effective in aiding them to reach a decision, and other

important facts. The schools and colleges of the church are being visited for the purpose of presenting to their students the claims of the ministry. By furnishing the pastors of the church with helpful literature, the department is stimulating them to preach annually on the ministerial call. Through a special Vocation Day, observed in all the Sunday schools of the church, it is directing the attention of the young people to the need for workers in the ministry and mission fields of the church. Literature especially prepared for the purpose is being placed in the homes, to impress parents with their responsibility in the matter. Thus in many ways the department is endeavoring to solve the problem of ministerial supply.

Again, the department is making an effort to inspire ministerial candidates with a high ideal of the ministry, and to direct them in their preparation therefor. Such a service is greatly needed. The average age of the men entering upon the active work of the itinerancy is thirty, while the age at which they were called to preach is only seventeen, a difference of thirteen years. But even after this length of time only a small per cent are thoroughly prepared for their chosen work. To save this distressing waste of life, and to render these men really efficient, the department is endeavoring to come into touch with all the ministerial candidates as soon as they are licensed to preach—or even earlier—and to guide them during their period of preparation. This is done by the use of specially prepared literature, by individual correspondence, and, as far as possible, by personal association. There is an opportunity here for a

large service to the future leadership of the church.

But if the church is to have an efficient ministry, the young men looking thereto must have more than inspiration and direction. They must receive financial help to enable them to secure the needed training. Ministerial candidates, with rare exceptions, are poor and unable without assistance to meet the expense of prolonged preparation. As a third method of developing an efficient ministry, therefore, the Department of Ministerial Supply and Training is raising a Loan Fund, and using it to assist poor but worthy candidates. Aid is given only in the form of loans. Each applicant is required to furnish satisfactory testimonials, and his work in school or college is carefully supervised. The fund is available for students in any of the schools and colleges of the church.

Another line of effort belonging to the Department of Ministerial Supply and Training is the development and correlation of the several forms of ministerial training within the church. In addition to the work of the colleges—and many have courses designed particularly for ministerial candidates—these several forms of training include the Theological Seminary, the Correspondence School, the Conference Course of Study, Conference Examining Committees, and Preachers' Institutes. By the development and correlation of these several agencies it will be possible, we believe, to secure a system of training admirably adapted to the genius and needs of our church. The working-out of such a system will require time, but the department is engaged at the task, and expects ere long to see it accomplished.

Finally, the department now includes the Correspondence School as a part of its effort. In addition to the instruction covering the four years' Conference Course of Study, the school offers numerous other courses included in the usual theological curriculum, and for these credit is given in the Biblical Department of Vanderbilt University. Though the privileges of the school are open to all, its main purpose is to serve those who have already entered upon the duties of the pastorate. It conducts about one thousand courses every year. Since its organization in 1902, it has included among its students—many of them for four years consecutively—more than one-half of all the ministers of the church.

In a word, the Department of Ministerial Supply and Training is endeavoring to raise up an adequate supply of strong men for the ministry, to inspire and guide them in preparing for their life work, to render them such financial assistance as may be necessary, to provide for them a system of training best suited to the needs of the modern minister, and to extend to them after entering the pastorate the advantages of constant contact with the University. In the use of such plans, under the guidance and blessing of the Spirit of God, we look forward with hope to an efficient ministry for the church of tomorrow.

THE MEANING OF EVIL

III. THE QUESTION OF MORAL EVIL

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You will have observed that I have frankly declined to make distinction between evil in general and moral evil. I am unable to discover any such valid distinction. Sin seems to me as inevitable as death is or darkness. Evil everywhere is the lack of good. If the man knew enough, if he had sympathy enough, and imagination enough, and will enough, he would not sin. But because he must be a child before he can ever be a man, he does not and cannot have intelligence and love and good will

enough, to begin with, to keep him from doing wrong.

Our experience truthfully interpreted bears this out. Integrity today seems to me the most beautiful thing in the world. But I aver that I had to experiment with a first lie as inevitably as I had to catch a fall on the ice in learning to skate. To do God's will, to make myself the channel in which good will may run, seems to me today to be the highest object of a man's desire. But I do not see how I could possibly have